CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a control point (CP) to perform searching operations in a network (100) comprising the control point (CP) and a plurality of content servers (MS-1 - MS-4) for storing a directory of media content objects and descriptive information (CDS) about the stored media content objects, the method comprising:

- querying (201, 202) the plurality of content servers (MS-1 – MS-4) to retrieve descriptive information about the stored content objects;

- analysing the retrieved information to determine which content servers store the same object;

- storing (26), for each object, an identifier of each content server storing that object; and,

- upon receiving a search request, using the stored information (26) to determine which content servers in the network need to be queried to retrieve further information about the object.

2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising storing (26), for each object, a local identifier of the object within the content server.

3. A method according to claim 1 or 2 further comprising storing (26), for each object, an identifier of each content server which does not store that object.

4. A method according to claim 3 further comprising storing (26), for each object, a local identifier of the object within the content server, and wherein those servers which do not store the object have a special value for the local identifier.

5. A method according to claim 4 wherein the special value is a negative value.

6. A method according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising updating the stored information (26) according to the availability of servers (MS-1 – MS-4) in the network.

7. A method according to claim 6 wherein the stored information (26) is deleted when a server (MS-1 – MS-4) is removed from the network.

8. A method according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising determining when a new content server joins the network and performing the steps of querying, analysing and storing for the new server.

9. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the descriptive information includes classification information, and the step of analysing the retrieved information uses the classification information to determine which content servers store the same object.

10. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the step of analysing the retrieved information uses the title of the object to determine which content servers store the same object.

11. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the steps of querying, analysing and storing are performed as part of a user-requested search.

12. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the step of storing stores information at the control point (CP).

13. A control apparatus for a control point in a network which is arranged to perform the method according to any one of the preceding claims.

14. Software for causing a processor of a control point in a network to perform the method according to any one of claims 1 to 12.

15. A control point comprising the control apparatus according to claim 13 or the software according to claim 14.

16. A method, control apparatus, software or control point according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the control point is a Universal Plug and Play (UPnP) Control Point and the content servers are UPnP Media Server devices.